

PRIME FARMLAND  
Mercer County, North Dakota

Prime farmland is one of several kinds of important farmland defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is of major importance in meeting the Nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high-quality farmland is limited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognizes that responsible levels of government, as well as individuals, should encourage and facilitate the wise use of our Nation's prime farmland.

Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. It is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. More detailed information about the criteria for prime farmland is available at the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

A recent trend in land use in some parts of the survey area has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. The loss of prime farmland to other uses puts pressure on marginal lands, which generally are more erodible, droughty, and less productive and cannot be easily cultivated.

The map units in the survey area that are considered prime farmland are listed in the following table. This list does not constitute a recommendation for a particular land use. On some soils included in the list, measures that overcome a hazard or limitation, such as flooding, wetness, and droughtiness, are needed. Onsite evaluation is needed to determine whether or not the hazard or limitation has been overcome by corrective measures. The extent of each listed map unit is shown in the "Acres and Proportionate Extent of Soils" table. The location is shown on the detailed soil maps. The soil qualities that affect use and management are described in other tables in this document."

PRIME FARMLAND--Continued  
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Map symbol	Mapunit name	Farmland Classification
7	Straw silty clay loam	All areas are prime farmland
8	Grail silty clay loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
8B	Grail silty clay loam, 3 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
27	Mandan silt loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
27B	Mandan silt loam, 3 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
28	Wilton silt loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
44	Arnegard loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
44B	Arnegard loam, 3 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
51	Straw silt loam	All areas are prime farmland
91	Straw loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
91B	Straw loam, 3 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
94	Makoti silt loam	All areas are prime farmland
96	Grassna silt loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
96B	Grassna silt loam, 3 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
102	Bowbells loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
104	Magnus silty clay loam	All areas are prime farmland
2	Tonka silt loam	Prime farmland if drained
43	Colvin silt loam	Prime farmland if drained

